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MR. STRONG'S
ORDINATION SERMON.



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OF THE

REV. LEVI WHITE,
TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH IN
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ORDINATION SERMON.

MATTHEW iv. 19.

—*Follow me*—

NO sooner did our blessed Lord enter upon the work of his public ministry, than he began to select some to be the witnesses of his doctrines, miracles, conduct, death and resurrection. The words of our text were addressed to Peter and Andrew, two of his earliest disciples. "Jesus walking by the sea of Gallilee, saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, (for they were fishers) and he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." In the verse succeeding, we have an account, of his calling two others, James and John. And to them he continued adding, until he had chosen the twelve. These, one excepted, were ordained to transmit the history of his life to posterity; and to be the future preachers of his gospel.

Hence, there was a peculiar propriety, in their relinquishing their worldly occupations, and accom-

panying him wherever he went. He was the best instructor to whom they could possibly apply. By associating with him, by hearing him preach, and by observing his life and conversation, they were under the best advantages, to obtain that information, which was necessary to qualify them for the office, to which they were called. And, their hearts being unalienably attached to his interest, they needed no other motive to persuade them to comply with his command. To accomplish the purposes, for which they were chosen, it was necessary, that they should become his literal followers. And this they cheerfully did, notwithstanding the numerous inconveniences and perils, to which it exposed them.

But we are sensible, that the word, follow, as used in the gospel, is not always to be understood, in its literal meaning. It is often used synonymously, with *imitate*. Said Jesus to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Said the apostle, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." The word, follow, as here used, implies imitation, or conformity to the example of another. In this sense, the apostles followed our Lord, both in their private and public characters. And thus to follow him, is the duty of all who are favoured with the gospel. But, upon the present occasion, we shall consider the words of our text, as more immediately addressed to the the ministers of religion; and endeavour to shew, that it is the indispensable duty of all such, to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, an interesting inquiry arises: In what respects, is it the duty of the ministers of the gospel, to imitate Christ?

We observe first, that it is their duty to imitate him, in their preaching. Hence, it will not be deemed impertinent, upon the present occasion, to bring to view some of the sentiments or doctrines

which our Saviour taught, during his minstry on earth. It may be proper, however, previously to remark, that we shall have time to notice those doctrines only which we esteem the most distinguishing and important. And we observe,

1. That our Lord taught the being, and character of God. That there is one self-existent, independent, eternal, and supreme being, who is infinite, in every possible perfection, and the only true God; is an idea, inseparable from the gospel. It is needless to enumerate particular texts, to prove that this was a doctrine advanced by Christ; because it is evident, from the whole tenor of his preaching.

2. Christ taught his own character. He informed his hearers, that he was both the Son of God, and the son of man. Implying, that he possesses, both a human and divine nature. He is God, and he is man.

That Christ is not a divine person, or really God, some have inferred, from his making such declarations as the following, respecting himself. "The father is greater than I. Of mine own self I can do nothing." Speaking of the day of judgment, he says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." From these, and other similar assertions, some have drawn an argument, which they suppose to be conclusive, in opposition to the real divinity of our Saviour.

But that he is here speaking of his human nature only, admits of no doubt; *that*, it is true, is finite; limited in its views and operations. But to infer from this, that he has not a divine nature, is totally unwarrantable. If we examine other parts of the evangelists, we shall find, that he claimed those titles and attributes, which ought to be applied to none, but the independent God. He asserted that all power, in heaven, and in earth, is in his hands.

And speaking of his own life, he said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." His knowledge is unlimited, his presence uncircumscribed, his divine nature unoriginated. Hence we read; "He knew all men. And needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what is in man. No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man, which is in heaven. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him. Before Abraham was," said he "I am." He is the "Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty."

Christ expressly prohibited the worship of any being, except the true God: but did not refuse such respect, when paid to himself. But to suppose, that he would encourage the practice of idolatry, is to criminate him as the vilest impostor. It is worthy of observation, that throughout the sacred pages, the work of creation is ascribed to Christ. Nor do they discover any being in the universe who possesses superior attributes. Nor, since he is the author of the works of creation, do *they* afford evidence of the existence of a superior being. Hence, if Christ be not, in the most important sense, a divine person, or the independent God, we have no evidence that such a God exists.

3. Christ taught the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, of divine sovereignty, and a general and particular providence. "Many, said he, are called, but few chosen." He represented the elect, as those whom his father had given him, and as those whom the most artful impostor could not seduce. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine

they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice. All that the father giveth me shall come to me." Thus our divine Redeemer, in the most simple, undisguised language, taught the doctrine of personal election to eternal life. Nor was this doctrine repugnant to the feelings of his benevolent heart ; for on seeing a glorious exhibition of divine sovereignty, with which it is inseparably connected, he broke out into an ecstacy of praise and said, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." With reference to divine providence, he observed, " Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Nor did he represent the human heart as less under divine control. This appears, from his quoting that solemn passage, written in the ninth, and tenth verses of the sixth chapter of Isaiah, and declaring it to be fulfilled in those incorrigible Jews, who rejected his preaching, as well as from many other considerations which might be mentioned. These, and other things, of similar import, taught by our Lord, imply the general and particular providence of God. His dominion extends, not only to the largest and most important ; but also, to the most minute events in the universe.

4. Christ taught the nature and necessity of disinterested benevolence ; and represented it, as the only criterion, by which the saint can be distinguish-

ed from the sinner. Hence, being asked, "Which is the first and greatest commandment in the law?" He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength; this is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In another place he observed, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise: For if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners do also even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." These sentiments of our divine Lord, are stated by the evangelist Matthew, in different, but not less distinguishing, terms.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." In these passages, the absolute necessity of disinterested love is so plainly taught, that no comment is necessary to illustrate the idea; it is represented as that which alone distinguishes the character of the saint, from the character of the sinner.

5. Our Lord taught his hearers, that mankind are, by nature, *totally* destitute, of that benevolent temper which has just been described, and under the entire power and dominion of sin. Hence addressing himself to sinners he said, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. You have seen and hated, both me and my father." These two short sentences, convey two very solemn ideas. The first evinces, that the hearts of sinners are totally destitute of moral goodness, and the second declares their positive enmity and opposition against the divine character. Hence he might well address them in the following expressive language, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell! Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

The scribes and pharisees professed uncommon purity and sanctity, both of heart and life. But, their real characters were not secreted from the all-penetrating eye of Christ. Hence, he unmasked their hearts, and exposed their hypocrisy and selfishness, not only to their own, but to public view. "Wo unto you scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tythe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto you scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but within, they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Wo unto you scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within, are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear

righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Is it in the power of language, more strikingly to express the total corruption and selfishness of human nature? Since their hearts were *full* of hypocrisy and iniquity, it involves a contradiction to say, that they possessed any degree of right affection.

From no part of our Saviour's preaching does it appear, that he ever ascribed the least possible degree of right affection to the heart, antecedent to regeneration. At a certain time, a rich young man, of distinguished reputation, very politely addressed him, on the subject of his future happiness. "Good master, said he, what *good thing* shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Firmly believing in the intrinsic goodness of his heart, he doubtless expected the immediate approbation of Christ. But, before their interview closed, our Lord led him to see, that he was a total stranger to the christian temper; and opposed to that self-denial which the gospel requires, in order to salvation.

This was, to the young man, a most painful scene, and ended, very differently, from what he had anticipated. But Christ was no more severe with him, than with the rest of his hearers. He plainly unfolded, to the view of all, the total depravity of their hearts by nature.

6. Christ taught the absolute necessity of regeneration, or the renovation of the heart by the spirit of God, in order to salvation. Hence, said he, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit." Our Lord was also very careful to inform his hearers, that he is the only medium, through which, any of the fallen race of man can obtain reconciliation with

God, and become entitled to the promise of eternal life. "I am the way, said he, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

But though he represented himself an all-sufficient Saviour; yet he always suspended the salvation and final happiness of men, upon the condition of faith and repentance, exercised during the present life. "The time is fulfilled, said he, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel. Except ye repent ye shall all perish. He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

He encouraged his hearers, to comply with these requisitions, by the most express promise of eternal life, in case they complied. But, in none of his discourses, do we find the smallest promise of future good, made to the impenitent, remaining such. Instead of this he solemnly declared, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

7. Christ taught his hearers that those, who comply with the requisitions of his gospel, shall never entirely loose the grace of God, but persevere to eternal life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

8. Christ taught that those who would be his disciples, and finally inherit the promises of eternal life, must cultivate purity of heart, practice self-denial, exercise supreme love to him, and yield a universal obedience to his commands.

Hence, said he, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that looseth his life for my sake shall find it. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. No man can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Then are ye my friends, when ye do whatsoever I command you."

9. A future resurrection, and a general judgment, together with the endless happiness of the righteous, and the endless punishment of the wicked, are found among the doctrines taught by our Saviour.

"The hour is coming, said he, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. If thy hand offend thee cut it off: It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one

from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. Then shall he also say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

It is worthy of observation, that the same word, in this passage, as it stands in the original, is used to describe the perpetuity of punishment, which is used to describe the perpetuity of happiness. Hence, the evidence is as conclusive that the punishment of the finally impenitent will be endless, as that the happiness of the righteous will be endless.

Thus I have briefly noticed, some of the most important and distinguishing doctrines which our Lord inculcated during his public ministry. Hence, we are enabled to see how the ministers of the gospel ought to preach.

That it is their indispensable duty to preach, as far as possible, as Christ did, I need spend no time in proving. In this respect they are to follow him. He is to be their invariable pattern. And since they are to imitate him in their preaching, they are to preach the same doctrines which he did. Their sermons are to be in unison with his. Hence, they are to unfold the true character of God. They are to maintain the doctrine of the sacred trinity; especially the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to preach the doctrine of personal election to eternal life; the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and the universal and particular providence of God. They are to urge the absolute necessity of disinterested love to God and men; and to teach their

hearers, that unless they possess this love, they have no claim to the christian character. They are to unveil the human heart, and in the most express, unequivocal language, declare its total selfishness, enmity and opposition against the truth as it is in Jesus. And, consequently, to teach mankind, that, so long as they remain impenitent, they do nothing, which can, with the least propriety, be considered, as obedience to the divine commands; but are continually accumulating blame, and sinking deeper, and deeper, in the gulph of moral pollution.

They are to preach Christ as the only Saviour. This will lead them to illustrate the necessity, suitability, and all-sufficiency of his atonement. His readiness to pardon, and receive to favor all, who will comply with the requisitions of the gospel. They will also inculcate the absolute necessity of regeneration, repentance and faith in order to future happiness. They will comfort and encourage the righteous, by those blessed promises, which assure that eternal life shall be the portion of those, who endure to the end, in ways of well doing. And they will warn and alarm the wicked, by setting before them, in the most glaring light, those awful threatenings which declare, in the most unconditional language, that all who depart this world, unreconciled to God, " Shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

These, and things of similar import, constitute the most prominent features, in the sermons of those ministers, who make Christ the pattern of their preaching. And these things they will constantly inculcate, whether they be pleasing or displeasing to their hearers.

Our Lord never consulted the taste of his hearers, in order to know what to preach. With no degree of propriety, will the character of a temporizer ap-

ply to him. He often exhibited those truths to the Jews, which he knew would be extremely displeasing, and finally inkindle their enmity against him into an unquenchable flame. But this was not a motive sufficient to dissuade him from the utmost fidelity. It ought to be carefully remembered, however, that Christ never advanced any doctrine, merely because it was displeasing to his hearers. This was not the ultimate end of his preaching—nor ought it to be with any of his followers. Be existing circumstances what they may, they should never intentionally irritate. But they ought, conscientiously, and faithfully, to preach the whole truth, whether it please or offend those to whom they deliver it. He who makes the taste of his audience the standard of his preaching, departs from the example of Christ, and is not worthy to be called his minister.

But have we not too much reason to fear, that this is the character of some modern preachers?

May not those be found, who, for fear of wounding the feelings, and incurring the displeasure of some of the polite part of their hearers, withhold the pungent, soul-humbling truths of the gospel? And who, to render themselves acceptable to such, prophesy smooth things, and entertain them with eloquent harangues on mere outward morality, which bear but little more resemblance to the preaching of Christ, than to the writings of Seneca, Epictetus, or Plato? Indeed, do not some preachers, at the present day openly deny, and oppose, the distinguishing doctrines taught by our Lord himself?

Do not some deny his real divinity, and represent him as no more than a mere creature? Do they not give a very different description of human nature, from that which is found in his discourses? A description, which, instead of mortifying, is calculated

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to flatter the pride and vanity of the self-righteous heart ; and well suited to make blind eyes blinder, and hard hearts harder. Do they not treat with sovereign contempt, the idea of disinterested benevolence, and represent true religion to be nothing superior, to a refined system of selfishness? And do they not silently, if not in a more direct way, encourage the world to believe in the delusive doctrine of universal salvation? Do such preachers imitate the Lord Jesus Christ?

But it is time to proceed to another idea. Ministers of the gospel should imitate Christ, both in temper of mind and conduct.

He was the most immaculate character that ever lived in our fallen world. "He was harmless and undefiled, he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. His most inveterate opposers could never substantiate a criminal charge against him. Supported by conscious innocence, he demanded of them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And he was not only a perfect stranger to sin, but eminently distinguished for holiness of heart and life. His heart was a flame of sacred love. He was endued with all the graces and virtues of the holy spirit. "The spirit of the Lord God was upon him; because the Lord had anointed him to preach good tidings to the meek." The exalted purity and holiness of our divine Redeemer were among the noblest qualifications which he possessed, as a preacher of righteousness. Indeed, without these, all his other perfections would not have qualified him for that sacred office. And though it is not expected that any of his ministers will equal him in purity and holiness, either of heart or life, yet in these respects they should all be his constant imitators, and approach as near to the original as possible.

Be the intellectual powers of a man ever so vigorous and shining, his acquired knowledge ever so

extensive, his natural disposition ever so amiable and engaging, and his morals ever so irreproachable, yet, if he be destitute of real holiness of heart, he is essentially deficient as a preacher of the gospel. Hence, said the apostle, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity I am nothing. And tho' I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity it profiteth me nothing." Having thus taught the absolute necessity of charity, in order to the acceptable performance of any duty, he proceeds to describe its excellent nature and operations. "Charity suffereth long and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity; but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth." Be a man's other qualifications what they may, it is indispensably necessary that his heart and life should be under the influence of this noble affection, in order to enter the ministerial profession with any well founded hopes of success, or just reason to expect the approbation of his Lord and master.

Again; Christ's ministers should imitate him in those excellent virtues of submission, patience, humility, meekness, gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering and forgiveness, which he so strikingly exhibited, during the period of his public ministry. It is impossible that their trials, provocations, and sufferings, should ever equal his. If malevolence and revenge can be justified, in any instance in the

universe, they could in him ; but these as well as all other sinful passions, he constantly condemned, both in his preaching, and in his practice. " When he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Even while the hands of his murderers were crimsoned with his blood, his benevolent heart was supplicating the throne of mercy for their forgiveness. With such an example before them, shall his ministers cherish and indulge malevolent passions ? Shall they be impatient under tribulation, while suffering infinitely less than they deserve, when he who knew no sin nor deserved any evil, cheerfully submitted to the unparalleled sufferings of the cross ?

Let his ministers remember that no further than their hearts and lives are governed by that noble principle of divine love, and those other excellent virtues which he exemplified, do they bear any moral resemblance to him. And they who bear no moral resemblance to him, instead of being his friends, are his enemies. Between these there is no intermediate, or state of neutrality. They who are not with Christ, who are not united to him in temper of mind, are against him. They are opposed to his cause and interest. But will any pretend that persons of this character are qualified for the work of the ministry ? And, that while they give no satisfactory evidence of a real change of heart, they ought to be inducted into the sacred office of an ambassador of Christ ? Will an enemy to his country be a faithful ambassador at a foreign court ? Will he seek the public good of the nation he represents ?

We observe further, that the ministers of the gospel should imitate Christ, in their views and motives in undertaking the work of the ministry.

A real desire to promote the honor and glory of his heavenly father, to save the souls of men, and

augment the happiness of the intelligent system, were motives which prompted the benevolent Jesus to engage in the glorious work of redemption. To accomplish these desirable objects, he was willing to submit, to the greatest possible humiliation and suffering. His own private emolument was not the leading object of his pursuit. "I came not to do mine own will, said he, but the will of him that sent me. I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In these things, the apostle Paul was a zealous imitator of our blessed Lord. His motives in entering the work of the ministry accorded with those of Christ.

He loved the prosperity of Zion; and to promote it, was willing to spend and be spent. And these ought to be the motives and feeling of all who enter this sacred work. In this sense, they should be "Workers together with Christ." They who undertake this work from mercenary views, or for the sake of worldly advantages, have no right to expect the approbation of the great head of the church. He never presented such motives before his disciples, as an inducement to their engaging in his cause, but forewarned them of many temporal inconveniences and dangers, to which such an undertaking would expose them. "The disciple is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

In the immediate view of the sufferings here predicted, the apostle Paul could say with confidence and triumph, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Happy would it be, for all the ministers of Christ, did they constantly possess similar feelings.

Again ; Christ's ministers should imitate him in constancy and fervency in devotion. It appears from the history of his life that he employed much time in the duty of prayer. Besides living in the daily practice of this duty, whenever he undertook any thing of special importance in the work of his ministry, he first retired and poured out his soul, in fervent prayer, to his heavenly father. Being about to visit Gallilee and preach in a number of towns, " He rose up a great while before day and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." Previously to choosing his twelve apostles and sending them forth to preach the gospel, he retired to " A mountain and continued all night in prayer to God." The night before his crucifixion he made that memorable prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. Numerous other instances of a similar nature occur in the history of his life. And in this spirit of fervent devotion his ministers should be his constant imitators.

We observe once more, that Christ's ministers should imitate him in constancy and engagedness in their holy employment. Such was the pleasure he took in doing the will of his heavenly Father, such his ardent desire to promote the happiness of mankind, that he wasted none of his time, in vain, unprofitable pursuits ; but was incessantly engaged in the important work he had undertaken. And, in imitation of his worthy example, his ministers should devote themselves wholly to the business of their office. This should absorb their whole attention. Unspeakable advantages, to them and their people, would result from it.

It is not less important that the ministers of Christ should imitate him in temper of mind, and daily practice, than in the doctrines they preach.

Such is their profession and station in life, that their example will unavoidably have extensive influ-

ence upon the morals of society. People in general have an idea that ministers ought to live in the practice of virtue and religion, however immoral they may be themselves. And if the example of christian teachers be uniformly in favor of virtue and piety, it will be a powerful monitor to the vicious ; and often do more to administer conviction, than any express, positive, reproof. Innocence and virtue, are clothed with awful authority. The teacher of religion, by reducing to practice the doctrines which he inculcates, evinces his own belief in them, and recommends them to the consciences of others with irresistible force.

But, if his daily examples contradict his preaching, he has no reason to expect, that it will produce any salutary effect, either in the hearts or lives of his hearers. When such an opportunity presents, they will not fail insultingly to apply the proverb, " Physician heal thyself." Hence it is of *indescribable importance* that ministers of the gospel take heed to their conduct, and imitate Christ, not only in doctrine, but in temper and practice.

By reviewing our subject, we may be enabled to account for the peculiar opposition which our divine Redeemer received from the world. Since he supported the most pure and spotless character ; since he preached and practised the most benevolent religion, which was ever promulged to man ; in a word ; since he gave the most incontestible evidence of his divine mission and authority, some may be ready to wonder why the Jews followed him with such reiterated, and in point of severity, unequalled persecutions. How was it possible, that they could imbrue their hands with the blood of such an immaculate, such a benevolent Saviour ! However surprising this may appear, to account for it, is by no means difficult.

While he constantly taught the perfection of the divine character, law and government, and justified the ways of God to men, he unmasked their hearts, and painted in most deformed, but just colours, their total selfishness and depravity. He inculcated that self-denial and benevolence, the practice of which, would have despoiled them of those sensual and worldly enjoyments which they esteemed dearer than life. And this self-denial he represented as an absolute pre-requisite to future happiness. These, and other things, which our Lord taught, were directly calculated to inflame the enmity of the Jews against him.

Had he prophesied smooth things, and preached a religion consistent with their reigning pride and selfishness, instead of being persecuted he would have been caressed and supported. But instead of flattering their pride and vanity, and encouraging their self-righteousness, he condemned every exercise of their hearts, and every action of their lives; and plainly taught them that so long as they remained impenitent, they were continually adding iniquity to transgression, and preparing for a more aggravated condemnation. This was like plunging daggers in their bosoms. They were opposed to the truth, and would not bear it. Therefore they combined against, and put him to death. Said Christ, "Because I have told you the truth, ye believe me not. And now ye seek to kill me a man that hath told you the truth that I have heard from God."

His preaching the various truths of the gospel in such a plain, pointed, pungent, manner, was the occasion of the uncommon opposition he met with from the Jews during his public ministry; and this finally pulled down their vengeance upon his innocent head.

Believing in the truth of the preceding observations, we have no right to lay it down as a certain

fact, that the ministers of the gospel have departed from the examples of Christ, whenever they meet with peculiar opposition from the world.

Since human nature is radically the same in every period of time, we have reason to conclude, that those ministers who bear the greatest resemblance to Christ, in their preaching and conduct, will meet with the greatest opposition.

Instead of wondering why the present ministers of the gospel meet with so much contradiction and resistance from the world, we have reason to wonder why they meet with no more. One reason undoubtedly is, because there is so little resemblance between them and Christ. They follow him afar off. The apostles lived and preached more like Christ, hence met with more opposition. And tho' some other reasons might be assigned, in accounting for the peculiar opposition which Christ and his apostles received from the world; yet, we believe, *that* suggested above, is the most powerful. And did the present ministers of the gospel live, and preach, more like Christ, they would probably experience more resistance from the unbelieving world.

We doubt not, however, that more perfect conformity to Christ, would be attended with consequences infinitely desirable to the church. The present is a period of awful darkness and stupidity; and this state of moral darkness and unconcern, in which the present generation is enveloped, is, of all others the most dangerous. This is a fatally intoxicating opiate, under whose delusive influence thousands sleep on and take their rest, until they awake in the world of despair.

And suffer me to ask, whether we have not reason to fear, that the unfaithfulness of ministers has been too instrumental of increasing this alarming lethargy? To flatter the human heart, is to render it in-

vulnerable by true conviction. And do not many who preach, even the pure doctrines of the gospel, do it with so much indifference and want of christian animation, that it makes little, or no impression, on the minds of their hearers? And do they not practically say, that religion is of far less importance than they pretend in their pulpits? Would the ministers of the gospel be successful in rousing the attention of their hearers to the momentous concerns of religion, they must be all attention to these things themselves.

Other remarks must give place to the addresses usual and proper upon such occasions as the present. And the pastor elect first claims my affectionate notice.

My Dear Brother,

You are this day to be solemnly separated to the work of the sacred ministry. This is the profession of your choice. It is a noble, an honorable, a useful, but arduous employment. I hope, and have satisfactory evidence to believe, you undertake it, with views and feelings, coincident with those of your great Lord and master, in undertaking the glorious work of our redemption: And that you will be a co-worker with him. Suffer me to remind you, that you are to make Christ the great pattern and end of your preaching. He is about to commit a number of precious, immortal souls to your care. You are to be their spiritual guide. In his stead you are to beseech them to be reconciled to God. You are to teach them the way to heaven; and to use all the means in your power to persuade them to walk in it.

And that you may accomplish these infinitely desirable objects, keep your eye incessantly fixed on the example of Christ. Follow him. Preach, pray and live, as he did. Let his sermons be the model of yours. Enrich them with the same important sentiments which he inculcated. To these you may

not add ; nor from them may you diminish. Beware, that you do not flatter the souls of your hearers. You are sensible, that there is, in all men, a spirit of self-justification. They are unwilling to take that blame to themselves, of which they are justly chargeable. They are wise to invent excuses for their criminality. " They hate the light and will not come to it, lest their deeds should be reproved."

You will therefore endeavour to destroy those false refuges, in which they trust for safety by fixing blame in *their hearts alone*. You will vindicate the ways of God to men. You will represent the utter impossibility of their ever participating in the joys of the blessed, without a correspondent temper. You will frequently direct their contemplations to the cross, and paint the love of Jesus, in glowing colours. You will not fail to represent the all-sufficiency of his atonement, and his entire readiness to receive to the embraces of his mercy, every humble, penitent, believing, sinner. The duty and necessity of immediate repentance, will constitute an important part of your preaching. Nor will you fail to urge the duty and importance of universal and perpetual obedience to the divine commands. You will comfort the friends of Christ in adversity ; and encourage them, to patience, fidelity, and perseverance, in his cause, by those animating promises, which render certain the final salvation of all his faithful followers. And you will warn the vicious and incorrigible, by those tremendous threatenings denounced in Sinai's violated law. Endeavour to make your hearers feel, as they will feel, at the day of judgment. In these things carefully imitate your Lord and master. And that your public preaching may have a desirable effect, always exemplify the benevolent doctrines you teach to others. Live as Christ lived.

Imitate him in humility, meekness, compassion, tenderness and benevolence ; in constancy and fervency in devotion, and in diligence in your sacred calling. Be a growing christian.

“ Add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound,” they will make you a good minister of Jesus Christ. If you thus preach and live, you will be entitled to his promised presence.

Difficulties you may expect to encounter, but be not discouraged ; if you are a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus, his grace will be sufficient for you. And hereafter you shall be admitted to his immediate presence, where is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where are pleasures forever more. But remember, if any of this flock are scattered, or lost, through your neglect, their blood will be required at your hands—you watch for souls as one that must give an account. O ! Be faithful ; for Christ’s sake be faithful in your work !

Most cordially, my brother, do we now “ commend you to God, and to the word of his grace.” May you constantly enjoy the presence of the great head of the church. May your life be long, useful, and happy ; may your death be tranquil and triumphant, and your immortality glorious.

The members of this church and congregation, will accept our sincere congratulations occasioned by the present solemnity. We rejoice that you are about to have the ordinances of the gospel resettled among you. This is a day big with important consequences to you and your children. Suffer me to ask you whether you are willing to receive a minister who will live and preach like Christ ? Such an one, we hope and trust, he is this day sending you. And should he prove to be of this character, he will

do great execution here, and fit each one of you, for endless joy or endless woe.

Our divine Lord told his hearers that "For judgment he was come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." He informed them, that their criminality would be greatly enhanced, in consequence of his living among, and preaching to them, if they finally rejected him. "Had I not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin." Speaking of those places in which most of his mighty works were done, he said, "It should be more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them." Agreeably to these sentiments, the apostle speaking of himself, and other preachers, said, "We are unto God a sweet favour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.—To the one we are the favour of death unto death, and to the other the favour of life unto life." And thus it will be with him whom you are this day to receive for your minister. If he prove to be a faithful follower of Christ, and come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, he will fit you for exalted happiness or unspeakable misery. Therefore take heed how you hear. Never reject any sentiments which he advances, unless you have conclusive proof that they are in opposition to the sentiments taught by Christ. You will carefully remember, that, since it is his duty to preach the pure doctrines of the gospel, it is your duty to receive, and reduce them to practice. Let him feel the interest of your prayers, your candor, your councils, and charity. Make suitable allowances, for his imperfection. For though he is your minister, he is a man of like passions with yourselves, liable to err.

You have heard that it is his indispensable duty to give himself *wholly* to the work of his ministry ; if

so, you need not be reminded, that it is indispensably incumbent on you, to provide him a comfortable, and reputable support.

If he sows liberally unto you in spiritual things, you will liberally impart unto him carnal things. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." I hope you will omit no means, which are necessary on your part, to render his life as comfortable, happy, and useful, as possible. Above all things, give him the pleasure, to see you walk in the truth. Follow him as far as he follows Christ.

We ardently pray and hope that God will be pleased to bless you, and your pastor together for many years; that he will pour out his spirit, and make the preaching of his word powerful to salvation. May you walk together as becometh disciples of Christ on earth, and finally be admitted to those mansions of rest which he hath prepared for his faithful followers.

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

My Fellow-sinners of this numerous Assembly,

Through the infinite mercy of God, we are placed in a world of hope. Serious and important will be the consequences of our living under the light of the gospel. We are now forming our characters for the decisive judgment! We are acting for eternity! A price of infinite value, to obtain wisdom, is now in our hands. Let us not fail to improve it. Whatever may be our present feelings, we are all deeply interested in the dispensation of the gospel. For, in the final issue of events, it will be, either a favour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to our souls. The day of grace is passing with amazing rapidity. And when it is gone, our characters will be unalterable. Delusive is the hope, that a

day of probation is prepared beyond the grave, for those who remain incorrigible during the present life. Of this the gospel affords not the smallest evidence. Its invariable language is "*Now* is the accepted time ; *this* is the day of salvation." But,

" There are no acts of pardon past
In the cold grave to which we haste,
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there"—



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